

# Lebanon Domestic Worker Violence in Focus



West Asia is known to be a place of violence and discrimination for those who are not of the same culture. Cases of employee employer violence in this country have not been recorded like that of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) but cruelty all the same.

Legal situations in Lebanon have allowed offenders to perform inhuman activities. Since the family background of the country is patriarchal, whatever the father does to his family and his employees are their own business. It is already out of the jurisdiction of the government or the judicial system. The reason why domestic violence in the country has been too prevalent and dominant is because of social acceptance. No lawyers, police, judges and lawmakers would impose justice to a patriarchal member of the family trying to "discipline" his family and maids at what he thinks is best. Workers are afraid to testify since they do not have the financial reserve or militia to back them up. Women in the country are considered second class. If wives and daughters are being abused, how much more are immigrant workers who are not their own kind and religion?

According to reports of Sinclair James International Movement for Domestic Labor Reform, Lebanon has 200,000 domestic workers coming from Madagascar, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Nepal, Bangladesh and Ethiopia. Half of them are without any proper documents but are exploited or sold to rich families who makes them slaves and abuse them physically, mentally, emotionally and sexually.

Domestic workers are excluded from the labor law and subject to restrictive immigration rules based on employer specific sponsorship that puts workers at risk of exploitation and makes it difficult for them to leave abusive employers. The high incidence of abuse has led several countries, including Ethiopia, to bar their citizens

from working in Lebanon. The ban on official travel to Lebanon has not halted the migration of domestic workers and may contribute to women being smuggled or trafficked in to the country. Other cities like Manila and Jakarta, however, approves thousands of employment applications to Lebanon annually.

The most common complaints documented by the embassies of labor sending countries and civil society groups include mistreatment by recruiters, non-payment or delayed payment of wages, forced confinement to the workplace, a refusal to provide any time off for the worker, forced labor, and verbal and physical abuse. Despite repeated public announcements by Lebanese officials that they would improve conditions for migrant domestic workers, reforms have been limited.

Reviewing the policies would also be hard as no translations have been done since laws have been written in Arabic.

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